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Policy Planning Staff, OASD(ISA)
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A NEW APPROACH TO THE ISSUE OF BERLIN

General

It is probable that in the coming fall or winter Khrushchev will bring about a crisis designed to result eventually in the expulsion of the Western garrisons from Berlin and in a GDR capability to isolate West Berlin. The crucial test of U.S. determination to run whatever risks are necessary to protect Berlin is therefore imminent.

The prospect is a Soviet campaign of nibbling. With each Soviet step the erosion of the Western position will be severe but the risks for the Soviets will be minimal so long as the option for the West lies between actions which are unlikely to have an immediate and crucial effect and, on the other hand, the ultimate action of initiating general nuclear war. Moreover, as this crisis deepens the nervous strain upon the peoples of the West will inevitably create pressures for alternate but undesirable solutions, such as a neutralized city of West Berlin. When coupled with the fact that the authoritarian Communists are far better able to repress similar misgivings among their peoples, the prospective political situation is reminiscent of that in 1938 before Munich.

The indications are that Khrushchev fully intends to force the issue and has considerable confidence in the eventual outcome. The response by the West must be a strategy which can destroy that confidence, deter Soviet actions and redress the situation. It must also
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be a strategy that the West can agree on and that will be supported by the majority of an informed public.

Present Berlin contingency plans contain many of the essential ingredients of such a strategy. A pattern of economic and military sanctions, carefully graded in severity, is being designed to bring increasing pressure on the Soviets. There is general agreement that the initial measures must be taken by mid-summer.

It must be noted, however, that the effectiveness of this strategy depends not upon initial measures actually undertaken but upon subsequent ones which can be threatened and whose employment is implicit if earlier measures do not succeed. It will be the nature and credibility of the total threat that may cause the Soviets to back off from their position at any step in our process of applying economic sanctions or military power. Thus it becomes vitally important to look beyond the first phases of Berlin contingency plans and into the subsequent decisions which may become necessary and which must be implicit in even our initial moves.

To be sure, the numerous uncertainties and multiple options likely to develop in the Berlin situation could invalidate any logical planning. Nevertheless, the only sound guide for the development of immediate actions is an appraisal of our total Berlin strategy. It is to this task that this paper is directed.

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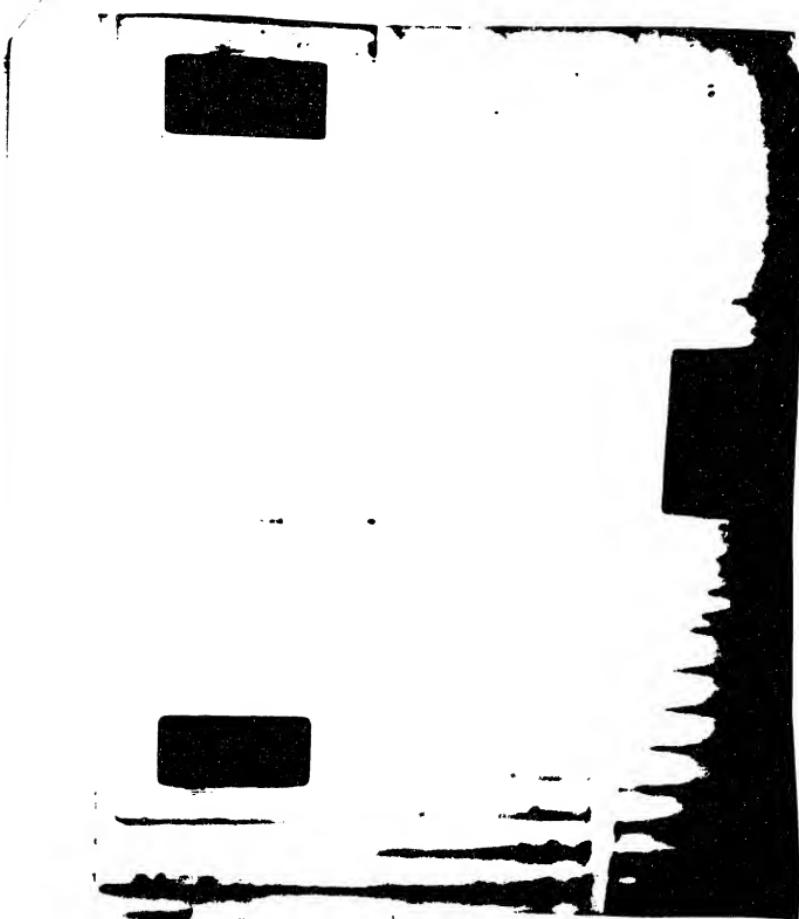
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Soviet Vulnerabilities

The greatest Soviet vulnerability in Central Europe is their feeling of insecurity regarding their occupation of East Germany. As long as West Berlin remains a free world enclave in the heart of East Germany, the Soviets cannot consolidate their hold on the GDR to the same extent that they dominate their other satellites.

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One asks what pressures in time operate on Khrushchev and company to cause them to press the issue so hard in 1961. Some have suggested that his personal prestige is at a low ebb, but this does not stand up under scrutiny. While his public statements and his private commitments to the GDR may be factors, there is no basis for supposing that they compel him to act in this calendar year. On the other hand, his confidence in the increasing power of the USSR in the world and his view of certain Communist future success should operate to permit delaying the issue to 1962 and beyond.

The language Khrushchev used in the Aide Memoire of 4 June is not without significance. "Deprived of a stable international status West Berlin at present is a place where the Bonn revenge-seeking circles increasingly maintain a tense situation and engineer all kinds

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of provocations that are very dangerous for peace. We are duty bound to prevent such a development when the strengthening of West German militarism could lead to irreparable consequences due to the unsettled situation in West Berlin" and later, "...it is impossible and dangerous to delay the conclusion of a peace treaty." (Emphasis supplied).

Khrushchev is realistic and hard-minded, and while he may appear confident of future success, he is well aware of the only half-completed but nonetheless certain growth of the West German armed forces. He knows full well that his relative power position along the Elbe is declining and that soon he will be in the uncomfortable position of facing the ultra-modern armed forces of the Federal Republic in addition to the other allied formations. It seems evident that Khrushchev has reached a point in time where he can no longer tolerate the rearmament of the Federal Republic without a solution to the larger problem of assured Soviet control over the GDR.



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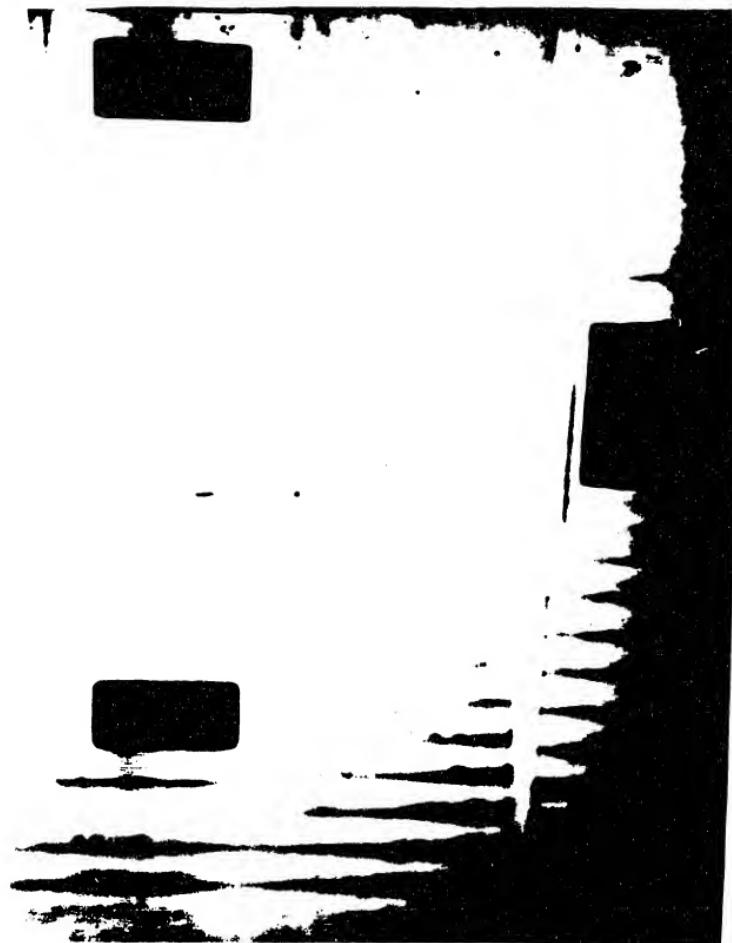
Recognizing these Soviet fears, the U.S. should continue to make it unmistakably clear, as Mr. Kennedy has already done in his meeting with Mr. Khrushchev, that the denial of military access to Berlin by whatever means and under whatever auspices will be unequivocally regarded by the West as an overtly belligerent act. Moreover, the Soviets should be told that in taking whatever action may be necessary to redress the situation, the West cannot be responsible for any consequent developments. The sense of such a warning would be to put the Soviets on notice that the consequences of action by the West may extend beyond the point of simply returning to the status quo ante. At the very least, such an approach would introduce a new element in our dealings with the Soviets in that, however small it might be, they would have to consider the probability of some positive loss possibly including the extremely dangerous consequences of an East German revolt. To take full advantage of these Soviet vulnerabilities a revised strategy on Berlin is needed.

A Revised Strategy



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Conventional Capabilities.

Our capability to fight and win a local war under the existing conditions in Central Europe will depend in part on the balance of conventional forces along the Elbe. This balance is now tenuous chiefly because the NATO force goals have accented nuclear capabilities to the detriment of conventional forces. However, significant measures can be taken in the time remaining to redress this balance to a very considerable extent. These military measures would not only give us a more favorable military posture but would be most effective in demonstrating that we are deadly serious in our resolve to fight a limited war for limited objectives in Europe.

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The Soviets can and probably will adopt similar measures to counteract our preparations. Khrushchev has already indicated publicly that it may be necessary to increase the defense budget of the U.S.S.R. and otherwise increase the military posture of the Bloc. His first action would probably be to bring the Soviet forces in East Germany and certain of the Satellites to full war strength, followed by the movement of additional Soviet divisions and air units from the western U.S.S.R. into East Germany and deployed along lines of communications through the Satellites. These counter moves would increase the gravity of the situation, raise the stakes considerably, and advance the situation closer to the ultimate crisis. However, in such a gradual reinforcement situation, time is priceless to the alliance and would permit the Western powers to initiate complete mobilization and assume, over time, a better posture than that indicated in the preceding table.

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Conduct of Military Operations

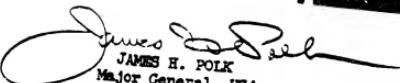
It can be observed that while political considerations must govern the conduct of warfare, politics and legality are not the same thing.

We are not engaged in a game in which foot-faults will lose us points. The closing down of military access to Berlin will be a belligerent act undertaken by the Soviets or by the East Germans with Soviet backing. By such an act the rules of comity will have been suspended and there is no cause for the United States to observe such niceties [redacted]

[redacted] The Autobahn is our present legal ground route into Berlin.

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